

Introductory reading/writing assignment

A Day-One assignment for Engineering Innovation should be a reading/writing assignment. There are three main objectives to this assignment:

- 1) To engage students in the process of assembling and communicating ideas in writing. The process involves exploring the ideas of others (reading), evaluating them in terms of one's own experiences and thoughts, and assembling them as a written document (writing). Of course, the topic should be related to engineering, technology, and/or education.
- 2) To provide a common topic for discussion early in the course, and to encourage the offering of personal ideas and strategies.
- 3) To provide instructors with an early indicator of who their students are in terms of their ideas, their communication skills, and their potential role in the class dynamic.

Instructors may develop their own assignment. But it should result in a 3-5 page essay which is evaluated for clarity of thought, organization of ideas, grammar, and syntax.

Below is an example assignment:

Friedman Essay

Thomas Friedman in **The World is Flat** paints a rather sobering picture of America's declining ability to compete in a global economy. In part, he attributes this decline to three factors: our waning emphasis on science/engineering, our complacent attitudes toward work and academic excellence, and our "Brittany Spears" values (Chinese youth idolize Bill Gates.)

Essay assignment: Two options:

- 1) Read chapters 2, 15, and two others of your choice from Friedman's **The World is Flat**

or

- 2) Read Friedman, Thomas, "It's a Flat world after all"
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/03/magazine/03DOMINANCE.html>

AND

read Florida, Richard "The World is Spiky" (*Atlantic Monthly*, October 2005).
<http://www.theatlantic.com/images/issues/200510/world-is-spiky.pdf>

Then in a three to five page essay, elaborate on Friedman's view of America's preparedness and future in engineering; then suggest how we might reinforce our educational efforts to address the problem. How do we change the culture? What must we do in K-12 and university curricula to help alleviate the problem? Who must lead the way? How and where must it begin? You will need to make specific reference to the book or articles to support your statements. This is not to be a book report! We're interested in your perspective having read and understood Friedman's and Florida's arguments. A class discussion will follow. Be prepared to express your ideas.